

CHAPTER XXII: FROM POST TO PARK, 1980-1994¹

A decade after the Defense Department's 1979 announcement that the Presidio of San Francisco would continue to be a permanent military installation, the Secretary of Defense disclosed that the grand old post would be closed. In the interim, however, the Presidio and Sixth U.S. Army continued to accomplish their missions. Also during these years the Army constructed several modern and much needed facilities such as a child-care center, 387.

The Sixth U.S. Army Headquarters' missions during the 1980s remained little changed: the operational readiness and mobilization of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve units within twelve of the western states;² the supervision, coordination, and evaluation of training for war; planning for and conducting mobilization and deployment training; and coordinating the use of military resources in response to natural disasters. Also, as the senior army organization in the western states, the Sixth U.S. Army would become once again the Western Defense Command in the event of a crisis or an emergency situation.

In 1982 Sixth U.S. Army carried out a training exercise named Gallant Eagle in Southern California. The \$45 million test involved the Rapid Deployment Force meeting a Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf oil fields. This preparation became a reality in 1991 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The Sixth Army's headquarters immediately activated a total of 117 Army Reserve components having more than 13,000 soldiers. The Presidio send one of its own units, Company C, 864th Engineers, to Saudi Arabia.³

The Loma Prieta earthquake, 7.1 Richter Magnitude, that hit Northern California in October 1989 again brought the Sixth U.S. Army's resources into play. The shock waves killed sixty-three people and injured

1. This chapter title was not stolen from a National Park Service document bearing the same.

2. By 1980 the Sixth U.S. Army's area of responsibility had been reduced from fifteen states to twelve states. New Mexico, Nebraska, and Kansas had moved to another jurisdiction.

3. U.S. Army *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, pp. 1-1 and 2-3; PSF, "Presidio of San Francisco, Inactivation/Retreat Ceremony, September 30, 1994;" File: *Gallant Eagle 1982*, Fort Point and Presidio Historical Association; *Star Presidian*, January 22, 1993.

more than 3,700. Damage amounted to about \$6 billion. The Presidio's neighbor, the Marina District, suffered devastating damage to which the Presidio responded. The Presidio's fire engines were the first on the scene when the rubble of collapsed buildings in the District erupted into an inferno. Yet the Presidio itself escaped without serious harm. Its Headquarters Command Battalion received the Humanitarian Service Medal for its aid to the stricken city.⁴

The Presidio fire department, a fully professional organization, had ten firefighters on call twenty-four hours a day. The two-company station received about 1,500 calls a year from the Presidio and Forts Mason, Baker, Barry, and Cronkite (one-half a company at Fort Cronkite). Stand-by fire suppression and medical evacuation teams attended every flight from Crissy Field. The fire department also provided emergency medical treatment and transportation, receiving about fifty calls a month for Letterman ambulances. As before, the Presidio had an agreement with the City and County of San Francisco providing mutual assistance for fire protection.⁵

By 1990 the Presidio work force consisted of 2,000 military personnel and 3,550 civilians. A census of the residents showed 4,700 persons living on the post. In addition, the Presidio supported three major and several small Army Reserve units having a total of 670 positions.⁶

More than people numbers, the deeds of individuals during these years received notice. The descendants of the Presidio Women's Club, the Officers' Spouses Club, organized "Hands Across the Presidio." This organization operated the thrift shop on the post and used the proceeds to aid impoverished enlisted families. Back in the 1960s Sergeant First Class Charles S. Hawkins wrote a weekly column "NCO Topics" in the *Star Presidian*. His popular articles discussed matters of importance to all ranks – auto safety, savings bonds, patriotism, sports, pay, saluting, and the matter of gossip and its ramifications. In 1965 Hawkins transferred to Okinawa. Before he departed, the Army awarded him the Second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Army Commendation Medal. After his retirement, Sergeant Hawkins became a member of the National Park Service in charge of the Fort Point National Historic Site and strove untiringly to

4. Binder, "Earthquake Update," PAM; *The Denver Post*, October 23, 1994.

5. U.S. Army, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, pp. 3-33 and 34.

6. *Historic Preservation* (July-August 1991), p. 22; U.S. Army, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, p. 3-12; National Park Service, "Creating a Park," p. 16.

develop its historic resources and the interpretation of its significance. His legion of friends and supporters were saddened on the news of his death on October 1, 1989.

A hero of the Vietnam War, Maj. Gen. Patrick Henry Brady served as the deputy commander of the Sixth U.S. Army in 1991. In Vietnam Major Brady flew Huey medevac helicopters time after time through blazes of enemy fire to rescue and evacuate wounded soldiers with skill and daring. He became a legend across the Central Highlands where in two tours of duty he made 3,000 combat evacuation flights and rescued more than 5,000 wounded or trapped soldiers. The nation awarded him the Medal of Honor.

In 1989 word became public that unnamed citizens were having the Presidio's eucalyptus trees cut so as to improve their view of San Francisco Bay. Apparently the Presidio did not object until other citizens and organizations protested. At that point the garrison commander, Col. William Swift, ordered the cutting stopped. Cutting did not resume when he learned that it would cost \$20,000 to prepare an environmental assessment before resuming.

While not unique among military posts, the Presidio's pet cemetery drew attention over the years. Grave markers to Pepper, Wiggles, Jet, Fifi, Friend Lassie, Rusty, Little Tex, Little Bit, Tar Baby, Buddy Bird, and inscriptions such as "A GI Pet. He Did His Time" grabbed the heartstrings of passers-by. Ironically, the tiny plot of land maintained by the pets' mourning owners and a Boy Scout troop came under congressional scrutiny during a cost-cutting review.⁷

In addition to new construction, many changes were made in the usage of existing buildings during this period. At the beginning of 1980 four of the brick barracks on Montgomery Street housed soldiers: barracks 100 – Sixth U.S. Army Band, barracks 101 – male soldiers, barracks 104 - woman soldiers, and barracks 105 – male soldiers and administrative functions. Because these barracks did not meet the minimum seismic standards for billets, the decision was made to move these troops to Fort Winfield Scott. This resulted in the band remaining in barracks 100 while the male soldiers moved into Scott's barracks 1204 and 1206 and the women soldiers into barracks 1205. The administrative functions were established in barracks 1214. The former officers' club at Scott, 1331, became a recreation center for

7. Col. Milton B. Halsey, Jr., interview, May 22, 1990; *Star Presidian*, 1964 and May 21, 1965; *U.S. News & World Report*, February 25, 1991, p. 45; *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 14, 1989; *Denver Post*, August 29, 1993; *Historic Preservation* (July-August 1991), p. 24.

these troops.

By 1980 the brick barracks 103 had been converted to offices for the Post Comptroller and Finance and Accounting. By 1982 the Federal Emergency Management Agency occupied barracks 105. Barracks 102 was converted to general purpose administration circa 1983 and by 1986 it was used to support Army Reserve components. Also by 1986, barracks 104 housed finance administration. Some of these functions were but temporary in nature. By 1993 the six brick barracks held the following functions:

- Barracks 100. Sixth U.S. Army Band
- Barracks 101. Enlisted men
- Barracks 102. Finance and Accounting office
- Barracks 103. Directorate of Contracting and Army Community Service
- Barracks 104. Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Barracks 105. Federal Emergency Management Agency

Officer's quarters 51, constructed in 1889 for a field grade officer underwent a conversion in 1983 to become the Distinguished Visitors Quarters (DVQ), that is, for the principal officials of the United States government including the President. The three suites in the building were furnished with period army furniture and were named for the first three commanders of the Sixth U.S. Army: General Walter Krueger Suite (the World War II leader in the Pacific), General Joseph Stilwell Suite, and Maj. Gen. George P. Hays Suite.⁸

Until 1985 the Sixth U.S. Army operations center had been housed on the second floor of the headquarters building 38. The floor space assigned to it proving inadequate, the decision was reached in 1985 to remodel the building's basement level for a new center. Construction involved building a classified library, administrative offices, postal facilities, computer room (Worldwide Military Command and Control System computer), emergency standby power, and the War Room, this last located directly under the Command Group facility on the first floor. The only effect on the historic appearance of the building was the blocking of twenty small basement windows.

8. PSF, Handout, January 25, 1983. This handout referred to the building as the Funston House.

- BOQ - bachelor officers' quarters
- VOQ - visiting officers' quarters
- DVQ - distinguished visitors' quarters

Col. Milton B. Halsey, Jr., interview, May 22, 1990.

The Presidio's communications system underwent a conversion to the electronic age in 1987. A fully electronic 10,000-line fiber optic switching system united the Presidio and the Public Health Service hospital. This system was such that it could easily be removed and installed elsewhere.⁹

In the early 1980s San Francisco's Jane Cryan realized that two "shacks" at 34th Avenue and Geary Street were survivors from a 1906 earthquake refugee camp. The structures were scheduled for demolition to allow for new building on the site. Community support to save the structures grew and in 1984 the Board of Permit Appeals gave the buildings a four-months stay. During that time the U.S. Army agreed to take them and in January 1985 they moved to the Presidio Army Museum where they were restored and interpreted as an outdoor exhibit.¹⁰

In the 1980s the fast-food company Burger King proposed operating an establishment in a new shopping center in the Lower Presidio. When plans for the shopping center fell through, Burger King then proposed taking over the 1968 army cafeteria, 211, at the main post. The Army agreed and Burger King began operating in February 1989. And in 1992 the South Pacific Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, headquartered in San Francisco, announced that its alternate Emergency Operations Center was housed in Fort Winfield Scott's former quartermaster office, 1220.¹¹

During his administration President Ronald Reagan appointed a Private Sector Survey on Cost Control (the Grace Commission) to determine ways to make recommendations to reduce the costs of running the federal government. One recommendation the commission made was a study to determine the potential efficiencies of closing military bases. In 1988 the Secretary of Defense appointed the Commission on Base Realignment and Closure. Its task was to recommend specific bases that could be realigned or closed. In its findings the commission recommended the closure of the Presidio of San Francisco because the reservation could not expand and the Letterman Army Medical Center highrise building needed major structural repairs. The Defense Department announced that all closures and realignments of the Presidio

9. Files: Voucher Book, June-September 1983; Sixth Army Operations Center; and Military Construction Projects 1985, Master Plans, PSF; U.S. Army, *Final Environmental Statement*, p. 3-27.

10. "The Saving of Two 1906 Earthquake Refugee Shacks," PAM.

11. File: Military Construction Projects, Burger King, Master Plans, PSF; U.S. Army, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*.

and other bases similarly affected, a total of eighty-six, would be completed by September 30, 1995.¹²

The law that created the National Park System's Golden Gate National Recreation Area in 1972 required the conversion of the Presidio to a national park status when it closed. When the U.S. Congress confirmed the Presidio's closure in late 1989, the U.S. Army announced that the Presidio would be transferred to the National Park Service and the planning process for the conversion began. The Army prepared a relocation schedule for the various units then at the Presidio that called for Sixth U.S. Army headquarters to transfer to Fort Carson, Colorado. It also began a study to determine the possibility of retaining some activities such as the commissary and medical care in the Bay Area for the support of the army community, including retirees. Also, the Army considered the possibility of continuing Reserve activities at the Presidio after closure. The Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Interior signed a master agreement in September 1990 to facilitate property transfer.¹³

A third party entered the picture in 1992 when Muwekma Ohlone Indian tribe, based in San Jose, laid claim to the Presidio, saying it had the right of first refusal when the Army withdrew. The National Park Service welcomed the tribe's interest but expressed surprise that the Ohlones claimed the entire reservation.¹⁴

By 1993 Defense and Interior had reached agreement that the Sixth U.S. Army headquarters would continue to occupy facilities at the Presidio after the reservation had come into the National Park System. In October the National Park Service published its "Draft General Management Plan Amendment" and an "Environmental Impact Statement." The plan stated that the Presidio would be "a dynamic setting for a network of institutions devoted to stimulating understanding of and action on the world's most critical social, cultural, and environmental challenges." Almost immediately San Francisco newspapers reported that the Sixth U.S. Army had expressed dissatisfaction with the plan saying that it did not "adequately address Army requirements resulting from (Base Relocation and Closure Act) decisions." Specifically the Army objected to the planned removal of the commissary and post exchange, and the plan had

12. U.S. Army, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, p. i-1. The closure date was later changed to September 30, 1994.

13. *Ibid*, p. 5-8; Reveille, *The News Letter of the National Park Service*.

14. Council on America's Military Past, *Headquarters Heliogram*, July 1992.

overlooked the Army's needs for recreational facilities and adequate housing. A National Park Service spokesperson was quoted as saying that negotiations would continue and that any problems would be resolved.¹⁵

Park planners returned to their tasks in an effort to resolve the issues. Meanwhile, U.S. Representative John Duncan, (R), Tennessee, stated that the Presidio would cost taxpayers a prohibitive sum of money as a park and introduced a bill that called for the federal government to sell off nearly all the Presidio (1,300 acres) for private development. Opposition to the Duncan proposal mounted and it was defeated. In July 1994 the National Park Service issued its "Final General Management Plan Amendment." The revised document addressed the issues that the Army had raised the year before. The Interior and Defense departments also reached an agreement as to Sixth U.S. Army's requirements as a tenant at the Presidio. After October 1, 1994, the Sixth U.S. Army headquarters would remain under a five-year lease with an option to renew. The Army would retain sufficient housing, office space, the main gymnasium, swimming pool, athletic fields, commissary, officers' club, a chapel, and three tennis courts. The Army would also retain the golf course for at least five years. This last caused disappointment to the National Park Service for it had counted upon its operation as a source of funding for the area. Once the Presidio became a part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Sixth U.S. Army's strength would be 380 military personnel and 330 civilian employees.¹⁶

By 1994 the National Park Service had acquired a new tenant for the area. Former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev had established the International Foundation for Socio-Economic and Political Studies at Moscow, which was dedicated to seeking peace through international cooperation. On a visit to San Francisco in May 1992, Gorbachev expressed a desire to locate the United States operations of his organization at the Presidio. The Interior Department made a building available at the former U.S. Coast Guard station for the "Gorbachev USA Foundation."¹⁷

15. *San Francisco Examiner*, June 11, October 14 and 15, 1993; *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 15 and 20, 1993.

16. NPS, *Creating a Park for the 21st Century, from military post to national park, Final General Management Plan Amendment, Presidio of San Francisco . . .* (July 1994); *San Francisco Examiner*, October 15, 1993, August 10, 25, and 29, 1994; *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 15, 1993, August 10 and 25, 1994; *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, September 14, 1994, containing an article highly critical of the NPS.

17. NPS, *Presidio Update*, June 1992, *San Francisco Examiner*, October 15, 1993; *Time*, "Gorby," September 6, 1993.

A sign of the changing times appeared in July 1994 when the Army announced that the ancient and historic Officers Club, the adobe portion of which had been inherited from the Spanish/Mexican regimes and had been occupied by the U.S. Army since 1847, had become the Presidio Community Club open to all ranks.¹⁸

The last week in September 1994 the National Park Service and the U.S. Army sponsored events commemorating the changing status of the Presidio. On Saturday, September 24, a reception was held in the old officers' club for the Vice President Al Gore and the Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. Afterwards the vice president spoke to the public at Pershing Square, with the Sixth U.S. Army Band and a color guard in attendance. From September 28 to October 1 a National Forum discussed "Partnerships Supporting Community Education for the Environment." September 30 was set aside for the final Garrison Retreat Ceremony. That evening the Golden Gate National Park Association hosted a fund raising event at the Presidio. At midnight, September 30, 1994, the Presidio of San Francisco ceased to exist as a military garrison under the flags of three nations. And at noon October 1 a formal ceremony marked the transition of the Presidio of San Francisco from the United States Army to the National Park Service. The remainder of the day passed in celebration.¹⁹

In preparation for the final Retreat Ceremony scheduled for September 30, 1994, Sixth U.S. Army prepared a brief history of the Headquarters Command Battalion that would be inactivated that day. The battalion had been established and activated on December 15, 1983. Its mission was the support of the Garrison and Sixth U.S. Army staffs. At first it had five subordinate units: Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Garrison; Sixth U.S. Army Band; Law Enforcement Company; Company D, 864th Engineer Battalion; and 16th Postal Detachment. Later, Company D was redesignated Company C and, as such, spent two months in Honduras building roads and seven months in Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Storm. The Postal Detachment was inactivated in 1988.

At 4 p.m., September 30, 1994, the U.S. Army conducted a military inactivation and retreat ceremony at Pershing Square marking the end of the Presidio of San Francisco's 218 years of continuous service as a

18. Leaflet, "Presidio Community Club."

19. NPS, Program, "Creating a Park for the 21st Cemetery."

military installation and 147 years as a U.S. Army post. The Public Affairs office prepared the program:

Prelude music by Sixth U.S. Army Band
Reading of Presidio history
Welcome
Rendition of honors
Invocation
Inspection of troops
National Anthem
Inactivation of U.S. Garrison and Headquarters Command Battalion
Remarks
Retreat
Conclusion

Carl Nolte of the *San Francisco Chronicle* described the moving ceremony. Four units – the Law Enforcement Company; the Headquarters Company; the Headquarters Command Battalion; and finally the Presidio Garrison itself folded their flags and went into an inactive status. Lt. Gen. Glynn Clark Mallory, Jr., commanding the Sixth U.S. Army, spoke to the assembly saying, "It was said that an officer in the old Army had three ambitions, to make colonel, to be assigned to the Presidio, and to go to heaven." Nolte concluded, "Not long ago, there were 10,000 soldiers and civilian employees at the Presidio. Yesterday, not more than 100 troops participated in the Presidio's retirement as a military post." Three flags would continue to fly: the United States flag, the Army flag, and the Sixth U.S. Army flag.²⁰

On December 8, 1994, the United States Army shocked the Bay Area community and the National Park Service by announcing that the Sixth U.S. Army would be inactivated, not five years hence, but by September 30, 1995. Its contribution to the upkeep of the Presidio (\$12 million annually) would no longer be available to the National Park Service to pay part of the cost for maintaining the area, estimated at \$25 million a year. At the same time, the U.S. Congress was searching for ways to reduce the mounting federal debt and it appeared unlikely that additional help would come from there. Then, on April 28, 1995, Vice President Al Gore announced that \$64 million in discretionary U.S. Department of Defense funds would be available for environmental cleanup and repairs at the Presidio: \$52 million for environmental cleanup, \$8.6 million for general repairs, and \$3.7 million to help the National Park Service pay for operation costs.

20. Sixth U.S. Army Public Affairs, Program, September 29, 1994; U.S. Army, "Presidio of San Francisco, Inactivation/Retreat Ceremony, September 30, 1994;" *The Sacramento Bee*, October 1, 1994; *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 1, 1994.

In May the Sixth U.S. Army announced that while it would officially be deactivated on September 30, an inactivation ceremony would be held on June 23. The Public Affairs Officer said that the Army's new Chief of Staff, Gen. Dennis Reimer, along with Sixth U.S. Army's commander, Lt. Gen. Glynn C. Mallory, Jr., would officiate. The Inactivation Program described the sequence of events:

Prelude Music
Reading of Sixth U.S. Army's History
Honors to the Reviewing Officer
Inspection of Troops
Retreat
National Anthem
Inactivation of Sixth U.S. Army Band
Inactivation of Sixth U.S. Army
Remarks
Conclusion of Review
Parade to the Lombard Gate
Conclusion of Ceremony

In his remarks General Mallory said, "Although we have lowered our flag for the last time, I assure you that the legacy of this base will never fade, never diminish. . . . We will march out the Lombard gate for the final time and into the annals of Army history." Outside the Lombard gate, General Mallory received the U.S. flag that had flown over the Presidio that day and reviewed the troops one last time. The band played "Auld Lang Syne" and the troops marched away. Thus was the symbolic departure of the Sixth U.S. Army from the Presidio of San Francisco.²¹

If only one could have heard the echoes in the Presidio's hills from all those years: John Charles Fremont; New York Volunteers; fort at Fort Point; miners and Indians; adobe officers' club; Civil War; the combat

21. *Star Presidian*, June 30, 1995 (final issue); Sharon E. Everett-Roles, project coordinator, "Born of War, Sixth United States Army, 1943-1945, Dedicated to Peace;" *San Francisco Examiner*, December 9, 1994; June 23 and 24, 1995; *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1994; April 17 and 28, May 2, and June 23 and 24, 1995; *Sacramento Bee*, April 28 and June 24, 1995; *Lahontan Valley News/Fallon Eagle Standard*, June 23, 1995. At the Presidio, the Community Club (former Officers' Club) and the Dental Clinic closed on June 30. Closing dates were scheduled for the following activities: Aid Station, August 1; Gymnasium/Swimming Pool, August 31; Military Police Patrols, September 1; last chapel service, September 24; and Army Housing Office, September 29. No closure dates were established for the post exchange and commissary. The Armed Forces will continue to use some 300 housing units for an indefinite time. In a telecom with the writer, February 9, 1995, the Sixth U.S. Army Public Affairs Officer stressed that Sixth U.S. Army would be *disestablished*. All documents concerning the event used the term *inactivation*.

arms; soldiers and families; an open post; American Centennial; Modoc War; Military Division of the Pacific; fifteen decades of military architecture; coastal batteries; 3d Artillery, 9th Infantry, 9th Cavalry, 24th Infantry, 30th Infantry; Spanish-American War; Philippine Insurrection; Letterman General Hospital; China and Boxers; Presidio Women's Club; Presidents and VIPs. Earthquakes; Fort Winfield Scott; Marine Hospital; U.S. Life Saving Station; Panama-Pacific International Exposition; Crissy Field; Mexico; World War I; Siberia; Golden Gate Bridge; WPA and CCC; World War II; Italian Service Company and POWs; Language School; Sixth U.S. Army; Korean War; Vietnam; international treaties, Nike missiles; American Bicentennial; and Operation Desert Storm.

And the people: Erasmus Keyes, Emory Upton, William Graham, Leonard Wood, William Harts, Malin Craig, Walter Short, Dana Crissy, George Wright, Albert Sidney Johnston, Irvin McDowell, John Schofield, John Pope, O. O. Howard, William Shafter, Nelson Miles, S. B. M. Young, John J. Pershing, Arthur MacArthur, Adolphus Greely, Frederick Funston, Robert Eichelberger, John DeWitt, Joseph Stilwell, George Hays, Mark Clark, William Dean, and Albert Wedemeyer. If only one could hear the echoes in the hills.